

## Book Reviews

*American History Unbound: Asians and Pacific Islanders.* By Gary Y. Okihiro. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. xiii + 499 pp. Illustrated. Notes. Index. \$39.95 paper

Gary Okihiro provides us a provocative history textbook that defies traditional narratives of American history as starting with British colonies on the eastern seaboard and then expanding westward, from sea-to-shining-sea. By foregrounding the experiences of Asians and Pacific Islanders (contemporary analytical categories, he concedes), *American History Unbound* shows how studying Oceanic worlds broadens our understanding of how a world-system of goods and labor has spanned the globe for centuries. One cannot view American history within the narrow bounds of a national history, exceptional and isolated from the rest of the world.

Like the late Tongan anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa, Okihiro challenges continental-bound perspectives that privilege large landmasses over islands, thus underestimating the importance of Oceanic worlds. "Land and water form continuities, not separations", he argues, and "oceans are extensions of lived, worked, and imagined spaces." (p. 25) Rather than solely focusing on the Atlantic world and its slave trade, Okihiro explains how the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean worlds brought a variety of Asian and Pacific Islander mariners and migrants who journeyed to—and through—points in North America, even before the founding of the United States. By integrating the histories of South Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders (mainly through discussing the U.S. colonization and militarization of Guam and American Samoa) Okihiro surpasses older Asian American historical narratives that focused mostly on the experiences of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos. In retelling the lesser known histories of early Native Hawaiian travelers to New England (like Henry 'Ōpūkaha'ia, who in part, inspired Christian missionaries to go to Hawai'i) and the variety of Chinese, Filipino, and Asian

Indian soldiers who fought in the U.S. Civil War, Okihiro shows that these were not merely curious stories, but ones rooted in larger currents of migration affected by missionary, mercantile, and labor activities.

Okihiro is transparent about how he has shaped his overall narrative, drawing readers into a discussion of historiography—the theory and writing of history. He shows how racial taxonomies developed over the centuries and how the deploying of these categories was part of a process of empire building and colonization. The United States developed as an imperial republic where matters of race, labor status, and citizenship were intertwined. Geographic location also affected the parameters of social interactions, the need for labor, and the availability of natural resources and market goods. Okihiro shows how migration for agricultural work in Hawai'i and California was common, but when the U.S. became a more industrialized society, Asians—like African Americans and other groups—moved to urban areas like San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, and New York. In discussing Asian American experiences in the Pacific Northwest, Midwest, Northeast, and South (all spatial constructs), Okihiro synthesizes recent scholarship and lesser-known historical data that he lists in suggested readings and concise chronologies for every chapter.

Uneven sex ratios in various geographic areas led to intermarriages between Hawaiian men and Native American women in the Pacific Northwest, between Punjabi men and Mexican women in rural California, and between Chinese men and white or African American women in New York City. Those of mixed Asian ancestry were sometimes recorded as “black” in government documents—and from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, Asians were routinely seen legally as “aliens ineligible for citizenship”. Racialized as neither white nor of “African descent” (as specified in the revised 1790 Naturalization Act), first-generation Asians often lacked potent political power. It was not until the World War II era that second-generation children born on U.S. soil came of age and wielded the legal advantages of citizenship and the right to vote.

Nearly every war that the U.S. has fought since the late 19th century has involved Asian or Pacific places as well as Asian and Pacific Islander combatants. Okihiro emphasizes that wars create realignments, as seen for example, in the United States' defeat of Spain in the 1898 Spanish American War and its subsequent colonization of the Philippines and Guam. Even after the end of World War II, the U.S. would build and maintain a strong military presence in the Philippines (though it had been granted independence in 1946) and Okinawa (which had reverted to Japan in 1972).

The war in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 70s, of course, was another realignment—and many Asian refugees were able to enter the U.S. via the

provisions of the Immigration Act of 1965 that did away with nation of origin quota restrictions that had previously severely hindered immigration from Asia. Domestically, the social movements of Asian Americans and other minorities during this era also found inspiration in Third World self-determination and rebellion. Globally, people fought against colonialism and racism since they increasingly saw the link between the two. The U.S.'s most recent "War on Terror", Okihiro argues, also has numerous parallels to the treatment Asian immigrants and others have received for more than a century.

Though designed primarily for classroom use, *American History Unbound* is theoretically sophisticated and yet a straightforward read with engaging life stories and well-selected excerpts from primary sources. Okihiro's decades of interdisciplinary teaching and research experience in African history, American history, and American ethnic studies are evident all throughout this remarkable, single-authored textbook.

Because he was born and raised on O'ahu, it is only fitting that Okihiro's book starts and finishes with the islands. Its cover features the *Hōkūle'a*—perhaps to emphasize Oceanic worlds, the bravery of Hawai'i's first wayfinders, and the ongoing legacy of the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance today. And the book's last chronology entry notes the 2014 start of the *Hōkūle'a*'s "Care for Our Earth" (Mālama Honua) voyage around the world. In the end, Okihiro's great achievement is contextualizing how the history of Hawai'i relates to the larger, Oceanic currents that have shaped American and world history. Hawai'i's history can no longer be seen as insular or isolated.

*John P. Rosa*  
Associate Professor, Department of History  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

*Waterman: The Life and Times of Duke Kahanamoku.* By David Davis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015. 315 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Illustrated. Index. \$26.95 cloth

David Davis, an award-winning sports journalist and contributing writer at *Los Angeles Magazine*, has written a biography of a man about whom he declares, "Until Barack Obama came along, no one born in Hawaii was more famous or revered" (p. 1). Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, surfing ambassador, Olympic swimming champion, and worldwide symbol of "kanaka" achievement is certainly one of the Hawaiian Islands' most famous exports. In *Waterman: The Life and Times of Duke Kahanamoku*, Davis takes on the task of examining this iconic